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8 From the spiritual to the profane and back

Religious melodies and folksongs of Turkic peoples

János Sipos

Introduction

Whether we like it or not, in our media-saturated world, the winds of change often blow away old cultural values, including certain ancient layers of folk music. Culture, of course, has always been characterized by continuous change, but the newer layers that replace older ones often do not have enough time to become fully integrated into existing cultural strata.

However, older musical layers do not surrender easily. Tunes that are believed to have disappeared find new life, like a hidden stream jumping through a generation or with the help of a revival. And sometimes they change genre, and religious music "saves" them.

What are these old layers of music, and what do we mean by "folksong" in this chapter? Folksong and folk music is understood very differently by different groups of people; moreover, there are people who reject the terms due to their old fashioned – even politically negative – contents. However, it would be hard to deny that there are communities who had developed not only a language over the course of their development, but also a special oral folk tradition including a treasure trove of folksong.

Similarly to Béla Bartók, I use this term the following way: folksong is that which is sung by many people over a long period of time. It is important to add that folksongs are orally bequeathed without a master–disciple connection, or rather we can say that in this case the master is the community itself. In the strictest sense of the word, in this chapter traditional folksongs are the melody stock sung by women in small traditional communities. Naturally folk music is in a state of permanent change; melodies come, go, and change; earlier and recent musical styles mix together and merge. One important task of the ethnomusicologist is exactly this: to reveal the social, historical, linguistic connections in the course of recording and analyzing these changing musical phenomena.

The importance of observing the traditional folk music of village/nomadic people is justified by the fact that many folksongs gained their present forms after long development processes that were influenced by many. Parallel to this development, several song variants came into being, gradually becoming more or less homogeneous musical styles. Without knowing these folk music layers, it

difficult to understand the manifestation of "higher" or simply other music cultures of any community or people. And yes, there is a danger when applying the methods of social or cultural anthropology in ethnomusicology in that we concentrate only on the social and cultural aspects without studying the music itself as well.

This chapter deals with the religious and secular repertoires of some Turkic peoples and the connections between them. In the book that I wrote together with Éva Csáki, *The Psalms and Folksongs of a Mystic Turkish Order* (2009), I compared the religious music and the folksongs of the Sufi Bektashis living in the westernmost part of Turkey, which revealed a strong connection between them. Of course, it is logical and natural to suppose a connection between the religious and folksong repertoire of any people if there is no centrally ruled and canonized religious song tradition. A good example of this could be the Hungarian religious folksongs, which have a strong connection to the folksong tradition. Another example is the connection of the folksongs with shamanic songs (Szabolcsi 1925–26; Birtalan-Sipos 2004: 58–59).

Before I offer a sample from the folksongs and religious songs of Turkic peoples, let me say a few words about the Turkic peoples.

On Turkic-speaking peoples

Turkic-speaking peoples live on a vast Eurasian area from China (Uyghurs) and North Eastern Siberia (Sakha, Hakas, Tuvan), through Central Asia (Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Turkmen, Uzbek, Karakalpak), the Volga-Kama region (Chuvash, Tatar, Bashkir) and the Caucasus Mountains (Karachay-Balkar, Noghay, Kumuk) to Anatolia. The Karaim and Gagauz peoples also belong here, in addition to different Turkic groups living in Iran, Eastern Europe, and other parts of the world (Golden 1992: 379–417). These peoples have played a distinguished role in Asia for centuries, and it is impossible to understand the music of Eurasia without exploring their music.

Turkic peoples living today are not the descendants of one particular group with direct blood ties; besides Turkic components, they were formed also from different Turkicized elements. In addition, "ancient" Turkic tribes had their own ethnogenesis: prior to the Turks, Iranian peoples ruled the steppe region; parts of their culture were assimilated by the Turks, who gradually became dominant. In Anatolia we witnessed a similar process; the heterogeneous conqueror Turks assimilated the equally heterogeneous Byzantine population. However, we do not have enough knowledge about the percentages of the peoples involved in the process.

It is remarkable that the folk musics of the Turkic-speaking peoples exhibit an amazingly multi-colored character, and that their folk musics differ much more radically than their languages do. This fact adds to the importance of examining the differences between the folk music and religious music of the Turkic peoples. Unfortunately, analytical and comparative monographs summing up their folk music are few, and studies of religious melodies are especially missing; therefore, researchers are left to extensive fieldwork.

Methodology

This chapter is mainly based on my folk music research among Turkic peoples since 1988. Over the last 27 years, I spent ten years in the field collecting thousands of melodies and recording hundreds of interviews. My major research projects were carried out among the following Turkic-speaking communities (the number of melodies and the approximate time spent among those people appears in parentheses): Turkish people in Turkey (4000 melodies in six years); Azeris (600 melodies in three months); Karachay-Balkars originating from the Caucasus (1200 melodies in eight months); Kazakhs in Western Kazakhstan and in Mongolia (600 melodies in two months); Kyrgyz (1300 melodies in six months); Turkmen (500 melodies in two months); and different Sufi Islam communities (1100 melodies in 11 months). My research also extended to non-Turkic communities living in these areas, such as Tat, Zahur, Kurd, and Jewish (approximately 1300 melodies).

The first phase of my research series was funded through my salary from Ankara University in 1988–1993; later I received backing from my workplace (Institute for Musicology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences) as well as various scholarships (e.g. Fulbright Scholarship once, A. Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowship three times, the Stein-Arnold Exploration Fund of the British Academy many times, etc.). I also have received backing from the Hungarian National Research Found (OTKA) since 1999 both for research and also for publication.

As a result of my research series, a big archive of sound and video recordings and photographs of Turkic peoples came into being. This collection features a representative, even unique, catalog of Azeri, Karachay, and Kyrgyz materials, and also contains significant documentation of Anatolian and Turkmen folk music. The archive is supplemented by a huge collection of musical transcriptions as well.

Let us now turn to our main topic and let me introduce connections existing between the religious melodies and folksongs of Turkic peoples. First, let us visit some Sufi communities in Turkey.

Bektashis and Tahtadji in Turkey

The 75 million people living in Turkey have a very complex ethnogenesis, both ethnically and culturally, which had a strong effect on their music as well. Various branches of the mystical Sufi sect of Islam, such as Alevis, Bektashis, and Tahtadjis (the latter are the Sufi Turkmen "yürük" groups), exist alongside the dominant Sunni Islam,.

Obviously, there is no concrete date at which the Turks embraced Islam. In Anatolia, orthodox and heterodox Islam spread more or less simultaneously. Among those who followed the Shiite branch, the town-dwellers were those who were mainly influenced by Iranian culture, its language and religion, while the nomadic and semi-nomadic Turkmen took over some elements of Islam but kept their ancient religion as well.

The gap between the urban and rural branches continued to widen over the centuries. Some claim that contemporary Bektashis continue the urban branch

while the rural populace align themselves with the Kizilbash, who followed the teachings of Shah Ismail's father Sheikh Haydar (1460–1488).[1]

Later, the Kizilbash name was applied to those who supported the Persian Safavids against the Ottomans. Still later, it was used to designate the Kurds. The term gradually assumed a pejorative connotation and in the late nineteenth century the term *Alevi* finally appeared to replace it. In Mélikoff's view (1999: 3), today the term *Alevi* has the same meaning as Kizilbash used to have. She added that the religion of the Kizilbash is not Shiite Islam, but the Turkmen interpretation of the Persian Safavid doctrines imbued with Sufism.

In contemporary Turkey this is a highly complex and thoroughly politicized issue with widely diverse views. Typically enough, the definition in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (1999, CD.ROM ed. V., 1.0) does not tally with the Bektashis' self-definition.[2] A part of the (Sunni) public in Turkey thinks that the Alevis are Kurds, while the Bektashis are Turks, but in fact it is far more complex since the ethnic division does not match with reality. For example, the overwhelming majority of Urfa is Kurds, yet nearly all are Sunnis. In East Anatolia, it was mainly Kurds who followed mystical Islam, while in the Balkans it was the local population in contact with the conquering Turks.

Although both Alevis and Bektashis protest against being mixed together, they have many traditions, rituals, and prayers in common.[3] One essential difference is that according to the rules of the *Çelebiyan* trend, only those whose parents are also Alevis (or who marry into Alevi families) can become Alevis. Within this group, only the descendants of Ali by blood – the *ocakzade* – are first-class Alevis, while relations by marriage belong to the second rank.

The Alevis also differentiate themselves from the Sunni Turks, who represent the majority of the population. Alevis view themselves as followers of Ali who do not identify with Sunni Islam. The Bektashis are on the non-Sunni side whose main saint is Ali; they regard themselves as the preservers of the Turkish language and the ancient Turkish religion. In fact, they claim to be the real original Turks.

Sufi music in Turkey

In Sufi communities, the role of music is very important and many pre-Islamic elements still exist in their cultures. Different groups have different historical developments and their roles were different in the Ottoman Empire and in present-day Turkey as well. No doubt the research on the music cultures of these Sufi communities is one of the most interesting and least researched ethnomusicology topics in Turkey.

Let us have a look at the literature. Since 1920, Turkish musicologists have focused on recording and transcribing folk music for the purpose of preserving it, and composers tried to create a "national" style based on Turkish folksongs. Analytical and comparative methods to discover musical types, classes and the interrelation between them, as well as those comparing the repertoire of different

communities, have been missing. Ethnomusicological and anthropological approaches concentrating on the social context of music are quite rare as well.

Although we can read the works of Alevi-Bektashi poets in several publications, these poems have never been only recited but always sung. Music has a fundamental role in this culture, and at ceremonies in many parts of Turkey, Sufis sing religious songs. However, reports on Alevi-Bektashi music are limited to short articles, anthologies of verse or music, passing or brief references in general books on the Alevis or on Turkish music and some study of *semah*s (Sufi ceremony including singing, playing instrumental music, dancing, recitation of poetry and prayers, and other rituals).[4] According to Duygulu, "more and more studies are written about historical, theological and political aspects of the Alevi-Bektashis, but only a few scholars examine their culture" (1997: IX). We can cite Boratav as well: "there are no comprehensive studies about the songs of the (Turkish) folk religion."[5]

In the Turkish folk music collection of the TRT (Turkish Radio and Television), numbering over 4500 items, there are sporadic *tasavvufi halk müziği* or "religious folk" tunes, usually under the generic label of "folksong."[6] The archives of TRT and HAGEM[7] contain several other religious tunes not included in the TRT repertoire and not transcribed yet.[8]

In connection with the religious tunes of the European part of Turkey, the first names to be mentioned are those of Muzaffer Sarısözen (1899–1963) and Halil Bedii Yönetken (1899–1968). They collected in the years after the establishment of the Turkish Republic, as well as in Kırklareli, where they recorded folk hymns from Vahit Lütfi Salcı (1883–1950) (Vahit Dede).[9] Research carried out around Kırklareli by Vahit Lütfi Salcı in 1940 yielded the first important publication on the religious music of the region.[10] He presented a few transcribed tunes and touched on the relations between tune and text, and even on a few linguistic specificities. There are a few religious *nefes* tunes recorded from Aşik Ali Tanburacı in Cemil Demirsipahi's book *Türk Halk Oyunları* (*Turkish Folk Dances*, 1975).[11]

The first works more specifically devoted to Turkish religious folk music are the fourth and fifth volumes of tunes collected by the *Tasnif Heyeti* (composer delegation) of the Istanbul Conservatory[12] and published in 1933. They contain the scores of 87 Bektashi nefeses.[13] We have found that only a part of this excellently transcribed repertory is known and sung by the Bektashis living in the territory today.

Mention must be made of the multi-volume *Gül Deste* (Rose Bouquet) published by Turgut Koca and Zeki Onaran (e.g., Ankara 1987, 1998), which contains several *nefes*es with scores and texts. The Thracian Bektashis do use them but since they generally don't use musical notation, they can only use the words. The stock of tunes that they sing as religious hymns is fundamentally different from the music notated in the *Gül Deste* volumes. Neither in these books, nor in the publications of the Istanbul Conservatory, can one find musical systematization or analysis.

Hüseyin Yaltırık published his book *Trakya Bölgesinin Tasavvufi Halk Müziği* (*Religious Folk Music of the Thracian Area*) in 2002, then published an expanded

version with Alevi and Bektashi religious hymns from other areas in 2003 under the same title.[14] These publications are valuable sources, mainly because they present the scores and texts of 133 Thracian religious hymns. Their drawback is that the hymns are grouped by the contents of the texts, without any musical analysis or comparison. Although Yaltırık (2002: VI) notes that the *tasavvufi halk müziği* in the area of Thrace is different from the religious music in Anatolia, he does not explain his thesis; nor is the relationship between the religious tunes and the folksong stock illuminated.

It seemed well established that there was still much to discover about the musical world of the Thracian Bektashis. In 1987–1993 I lived in Turkey teaching at Ankara University and, more importantly, doing ethnomusicological research in several areas of this huge country. Since then, up to the present day, I return there several times every year continuing this lifelong work.

I also pursued thorough research investigations in Alevi, Bektashi, and Tahtadji communities living near Eskishehir, Ankara, and Antalya, as well as Bektashi communities in Thrace. Now we can quickly glance at the music of a Tahtadji and a Thracian Bektashi community.

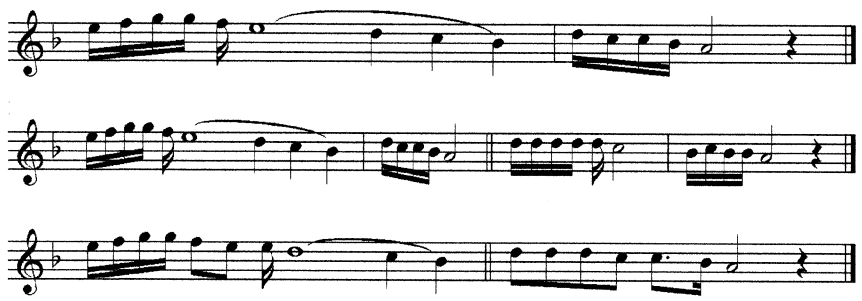
Tahtadjis

It was 25 years ago that I first met the representatives of Muslim mysticism.[15] Following the instructions of the famous Tahtadji singer Musa Eroğlu, in 1989–1992 I visited a Sufi Tahtadji community living near Mersin/Mut (southern Turkey) several times. In 2011 I researched another Tahtadji group in Akçainiş/Antalya (southern Turkey) concentrating then on their folksongs.

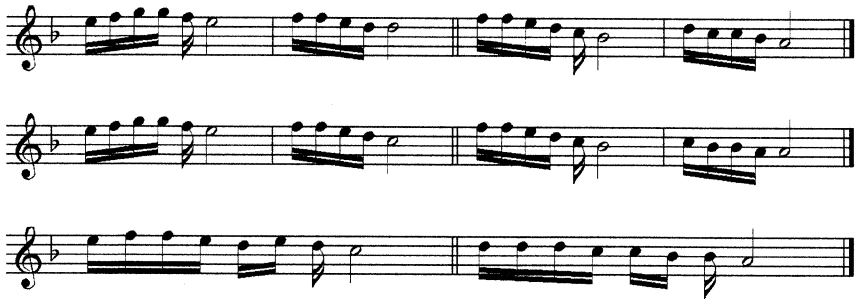
The folksong repertoire of the Tahtadji community consists of only a few melody types and their variations, which as we will see later is not an unknown phenomenon. Representatives of their most popular melody type can be seen in Figures 8.1 and 8.2. The genres of these melodies include lullaby, lament, bride's lament, wedding song, and dance song, but they play a role in the religious repertoire as well.

The structure of these melodies is seemingly simple, but in fact it follows quite refined compositional techniques, reminiscent of the melodic movements of some Anatolian *uzun hava* (*parlando-rubato* melodies with large compass) tunes: after reciting a few syllables in a few tones the melody rests on a degree of the E-D-C-B♭-A scale, then descends to the next tone in the same manner.[16] Its important stylistic feature is that the most important stopping points in the melody may be completed by a downward ornamentation before the descent continues.

All these can be realized with eight, eleven, or more syllables. The eight-syllable sections realize this descent in a more simple way than the eleven-syllable ones. The basic rhythmic scheme of the eleven-syllable sections is ♫♫♫♪♩ ♩♫♫♩ which in the religious tunes might be followed by an additional ♫♩ ♩♫♩ ♫♩ while that of the 8-syllable ones is ♫♫♩♫♪♩. In Figures 8.1 and 8.2, I show a few variants of this melody form.



Example 8.1 The first line shows an eleven-syllable melody with a large descent in each section. The second and third lines show two-sectioned eleven- and eight-syllable melodies; their first section descends to (or near to) the final tone in a similar way as a) does, while the second section descends from a lower degree



Example 8.2 Two-sectioned, eleven-syllable melodies; at the end of the first section, the descent stops on C or D

The picture becomes more complex, however, if we study the *religious* melody repertoire of the Tahtadji people. Before doing so, let us examine the environment in which these religious tunes are sung. On several occasions I attended their religious *cem* ("gathering") rituals. Since the banning of their order in 1925, Sufi sects in Turkey have held their ceremonies (*ayin-i cem* or simply *cem*) in secret spacious rooms[17] of private houses in villages or towns. Guards keep unauthorized persons away from these premises.

There is no strict liturgy of *cem*, but it has obligatory parts. We have experienced variations to a different degree, but in the atmosphere of a *cem* the elevated spirits of a community in a metropolis of several million or that in a remote village can be equally high.[18]

Ceremonies are suspended for the summer in most cases, as this is the time when village communities subsisting on agriculture do most of the work. Harvesting takes priority and everybody concentrates on it, and accordingly the first autumn *cem* can be held only in mid-November.

Ceremonies have a double function: the basic religious role is complemented by a social one, namely education in the service of community-building. The rate at which participants can translate the lyrics heard here into their everyday lives indicates the extent to which they have identified with the ideas embedded in those lyrics. Bektashis actually do not regard ceremonies as a religion, but rather as a way of life, a road (*yol*), that can be taken by one who takes a delight in it.

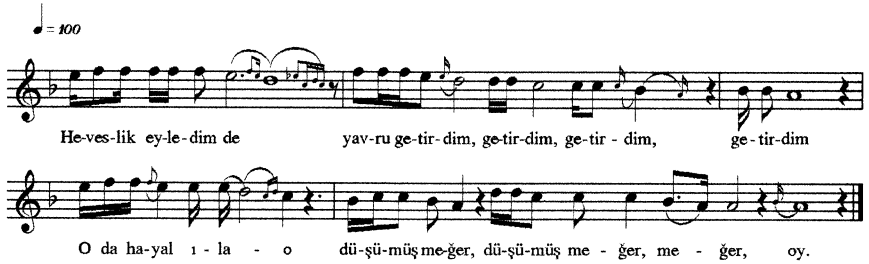
Men, women, and children are all present in Alevi, Bektashi, and Tahtadji ceremonies held in closed premises (*cem evi*, or "gathering place"), as we have witnessed several times and were even allowed to take photos with the prior permission of the leader of the community. Newcomers in Turkish Sufi communities bow their head in front of the holy threshold,[19] kiss it and never step on it. Everyone wears clean clothes – the women practically always enter in baggy pants (*şalvar*), headscarfs (*çember*),[20] vests, barefoot, or in socks – and directly head to the place where they greet the religious elder, the *baba* ("religious leader, father"), who sits cross-legged on a sheepskin. The entire ceremony proceeds in Turkish. In Musulça, the religious leader explained, "There may be one or two words that we have not yet been able to translate, but it is basically all in Turkish. We do not pray in a language unintelligible to us."[21]

Toward the end of the ceremony the members of the Anatolian Sufi communities swirl in a *semah* and approach God with an elevated soul. This kind of movement is known in Europe mainly due to the whirling Mevlevi practice that can be found in the ritual of several orders. For an outsider, the *semah*[22] looks like a dance but those who perform it vehemently disagree. For them, it is a prayer performed with sacred enthusiasm and their most ardent wish is to draw God near to them. Those who wish to whirl *semah* during the ceremony are directed to carry out certain gestures (kissing the hand, touching the forehead to the ground, etc.), which may vary in Anatolia, and have different variants, as we experienced in a *baba*'s home in Çorlu, and on other occasions in Musulça, Kılavuzlu, İstanbul, and several other places.

The complex, but in a larger sense homogeneous, religious Tahtadji melody repertoire can be explained by the fact that in the ceremonies it is only *dede*s ("fathers–religious leaders") and *zakir*s ("music specialists") who sing and play their musical instruments (most notably the *bağlama*), learn from each other, and thus widen and homogenize the repertoire.

The majority of the collected Tahtadji material can be found in Sipos (1995), where their connection to the Anatolian folksong types is also discussed in detail. Among these religious songs we find the folksongs mentioned above used as religious dancing tunes. For example, in the breaks of the dance-cycles one melody was sung many times, showing the same Phrygian descent we introduced above. One characteristic here is the repetition of the last three or five syllables of the text lines that lead the melody to a final stop.

We may call this melody type the musical *tamga*—a distinctive, identifying musical mark—of the Tahtadji community, which plays a fundamental role in their ceremonies as well as in their everyday life.



Example 8.3 A typical Tahtadji melody (Sipos 1994, No. 390)

Bektashis in Thrace

With my wife Éva Csáki, I conducted fieldwork for six years among *Bektashi* people migrating from Bulgaria to Thrace, the European part of Turkey.[23]

The folk music of the Thracian Bektashis is less formulaic than that of the Tahtadjis, and shows a strong relationship to some of the main forms of Anatolian folk music. However, several layers of their music are notably different from Anatolian folk music styles; for example their mourning songs are very different from the common mourning type in many areas of Turkey.

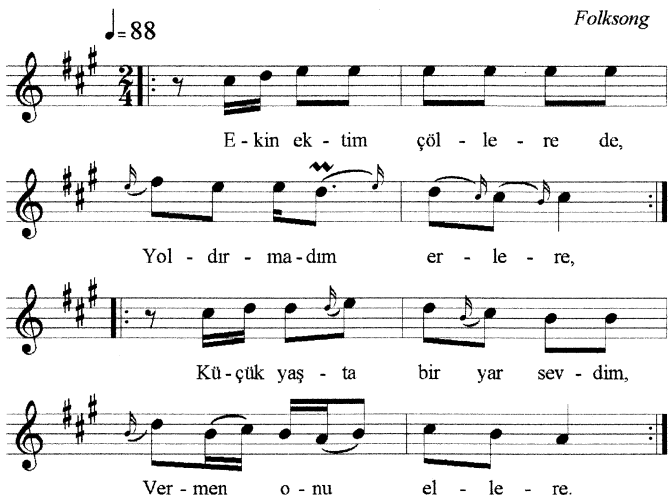
Although among Bektashis the *semah* melodies and dance help the mystic unite with God, there are often identical or very similar tunes used for religious as well as secular purposes. The relationship between these tunes is sometimes only structural or tonal, but in many cases there are analogous melodies as well. Simply put, in the religious and folk repertoires of the Thracian Bektashis, we may say that one-line, narrow-range forms predominate in folksongs; but more and more similarity between folksongs and religious tunes can be found among songs with a wider range, and four-line lyrical forms.

This relationship is not accidental, since Bektashism is also a folk religion without a centralized system of education. While the verses of their famous poets have been kept, somewhat varied but essentially preserved, in hand-copied booklets, the tunes were entrusted to the memory of the people. Probably that is why they sing many poems to their folk tunes or to similar forms. At the same time, this explains why the musical repertories of the Turkish Sufi communities are so divergent, despite the fundamentally identical Alevi-Bektashi customs, and basic principles. There are, however, musical layers in their religious repertoire that largely deviate from the folk music styles.

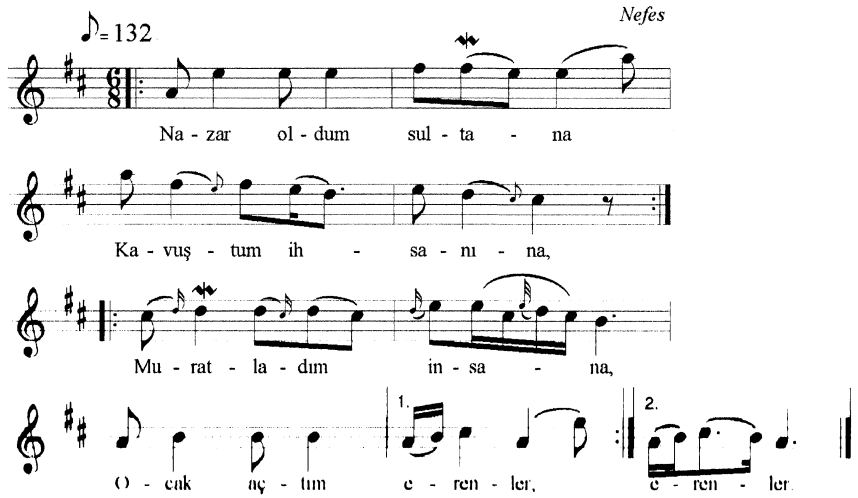
Thus, on the one hand, the research into Bektashi music has brought earlier folk music styles to the surface, since using tunes in religious ceremonies facilitates their conservation, and on the other hand, the comparison with folk music has helped to separate musical layers connected exclusively to religious rituals.

Let us have a look at Examples 8.4 and 8.5, where I introduce one of their folksongs and its religious *nefes* parallel. No doubt the two melodies are closely related despite the somewhat different number of syllables (7 and 8) and the different cadences in the fourth section of the repetition. The rhythm schemes of

♫♫|♫♫ and ♫♫|♫♩ in this musical world are near to each other, and often they appear in the same song. It is of deeper similarity that the melodic movements are essentially identical. The ridge and final tone of the first lines fall on E; while the notes of the second lines descend from F to C in a similar way. The third lines introduce a C–E–B rise and descent, and apart from the above-mentioned variation of cadences, only the first note of the final lines differs. Accordingly the two melodies can be considered near variants of each other.



Example 8.4 Bektashis folksong (Sipos and Csáki 2009, No. 391)



Example 8.5 Bektashis religious nefes (Sipos and Csáki 2009, No. 392)

Although we started the comparison of folksongs and religious songs in two Anatolian Turkish communities (Tahtadji and Bektashi), Sufi Islam communities can be found far beyond Turkey; moreover, they appeared in Anatolia comparatively late.

From the ninth century onwards, Turks turning away from the material toward the spiritual realm tried to find God inside themselves. Gradually, these seekers separated from the adherents of the rigidly scholastic religious theology of Islam. Islamic mysticism or Sufism considered asceticism highly virtuous, a view indicated by the name of the sect, which derives from Arabic *suf* ("wool") because seventh–eighth-century ascetics wore gowns of rough wool in their eremitic solitude or in their tiny communities.

The thinkers who developed Sufi ideology also incorporated the ideas of neo-Platonism in their system called *tasavvuf* ("Islamic mysticism"). They also incorporated influences from Central Asian, Indian, and primarily Buddhist notions.[24] On the other hand, vestiges of earlier Turkic animist religions, ancestor worship, and shamanism have also been preserved in many places.

Outstanding figures of Sufism include Al-Farabi (870–950) and Ibn Sina (980–1037). In thirteenth-century Spain Muhyiddin Arabi's work was considered a milestone, while in Turkish areas (in the wake of the activity of Mevlana Celaleddin Rumi, Yesevi, Shah Ismail, and others) a peerless cultural and intellectual movement unfolded from Khorasan to the Balkans. Rumi's *Mesnevi*, which interlaces Islam with Sufism, exerted great influence in Islamic areas—and even in the West—for centuries.

Together with Islam, Sufism also spread among Arabs and Persians and is known to this day from the Balkanian Turks (the westernmost Turkic group) to the Uighurs, and from the Tatars (the northernmost branch of western Turkic peoples) to the Azeris.[25]

Azeris

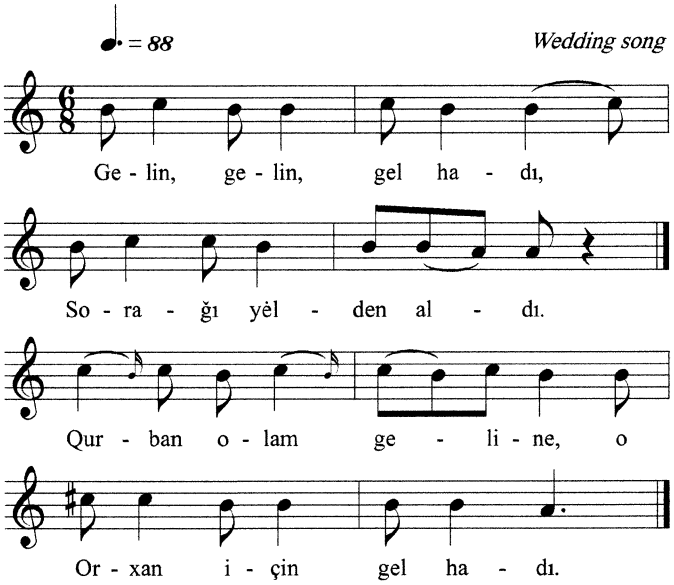
Now that we have examined the music of Anatolian Sufi communities, let us glance at the folk and religious melodies of the Shiite Azeri Turks, who have the strongest connection with the Turkish language. I have carried out extensive research in Azerbaijan, and I had the opportunity to observe the *zikir* ceremony of some Sufi communities. These rites were banned in the Soviet era, and even today they exist in secrecy to a certain degree.

The world of Azeri folk music is characterized by one- or two-section melodies moving on third or fourth tones of the Aeolian, Ionian or Locrian scales. The songs are performed in strict time, either in 2/4 or 6/8 meter or in free *parlando-rubato* mode. The same can be said of the melodies in religious ceremonies. Here, then, from our viewpoint the situation is quite clear: Azeri Sufi ceremonial songs are essentially identical to Azeri folksongs.

Most likely these characteristics represent musical inheritances from Iranians. This kind of melodiousness, with a Phrygian melodic variation in it, is present in the music of several Iranian groups, and it also plays an important role in the tradition of different Turkic groups that have a strong Iranian substratum.

To illustrate the connection between the Azeri religious and folk tunes, let us have a look at a *zikir*. At the beginning of the ceremony, kneeling in a semi-circle, the *can*s ("souls") sing religious *nefes* songs. The singing of *semah* is followed by the increasingly ecstatic mentioning of God's name and whirling around, reciting *hey, hey, hey, Allah*, then *a-hey*. Finally they sit down in a calm recitation of a prayer.

To my surprise the first religious song had *lullaby* parallels. The typical rhythm of the second melody in the *zikir* is ♪♫♪♪♫♪♪♫♪♪♫♪♪ and its melodic line is: B-C-B-C | B-C B || B-C-B-C | B-B A, which is identical to the Azeri wedding song in Example 8.6.



Example 8.6 The wedding song (parallel to the second nefes in the zikr) (Sipos 2001, No. 233)

After the Azeri case let us have a quick look at the folksongs and religious songs of the Turkmen people.

Turkmen

The description of Turkmen folksongs is very close to that of the Azeri folksongs. The form usually consists of one or two short sections and their variations, although simple refrains are quite frequent. The range is no larger than a fifth, and the typical scales utilize Ionian, Aeolian, and Locrian tetrachords. The melodies are sung in

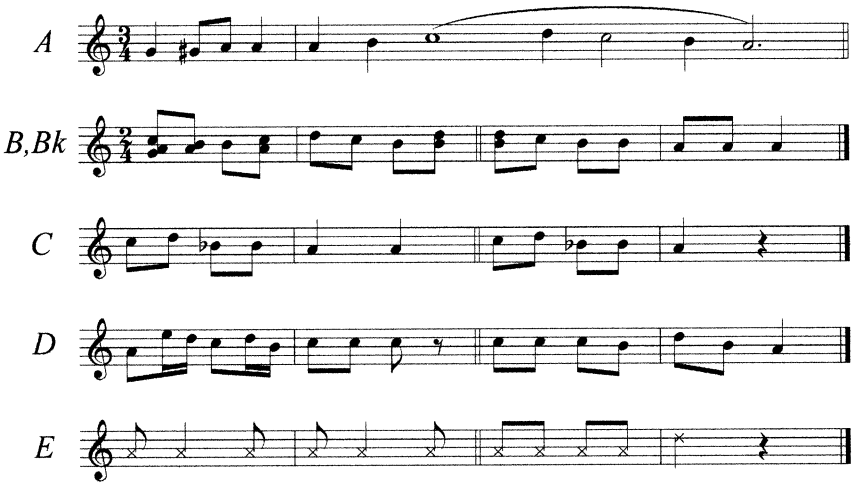
2/4 time or in a *parlando* style and the typical rhythmic formula is ♫♫|♫♩. In contrast to this homogeneous structure, the mode of the performance varies from area to area.

Although the great majority of Turkmens identify themselves as Muslims, many are non-believers and support a revival of the religion's status only as an element of national revival. At the same time, only very few religious songs survive, such as some songs of the Nevruz (New Year) feast, or rain songs addressed to the *Süyt Gazan* or "milk boiler" goddess.

There exists a Turkmen dance that is also important from the point of view of religious songs. The base of the present-day Turkmen dances is the *zikir* ceremony, probably leading back to old shamanic rites used against the evil eye for healing, and so on. Healing dervishes whirled around, occasionally stamping their foot on the ground (*dep-*), called aloud Allah (*hu-hu*, *Alla*) and chanted to the illness the word *küşt-küşt* ("go, leave").

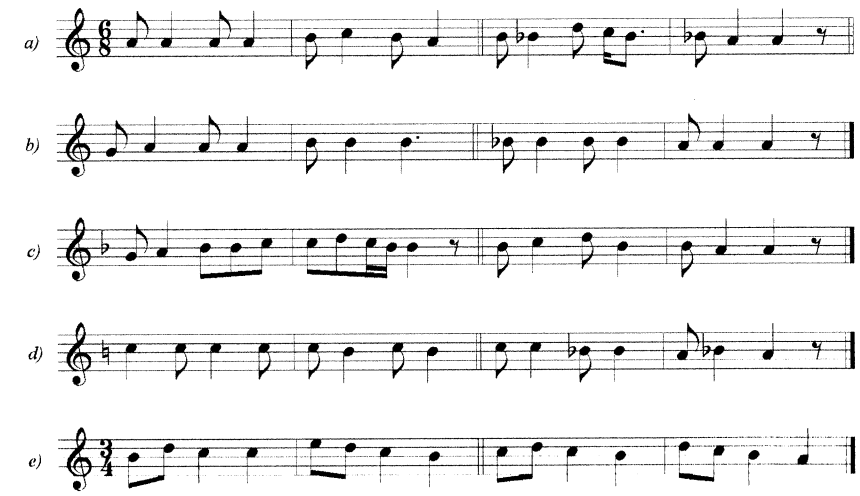
Among Yomut Turkmen living in the western part of Turkmenistan, the *küştdepti* dance (a traditional Turkmen dance specific to western Turkmenistan, said to have Sufi origin) is still performed. The movements and the melodies are traditional, but they have lost the religious content and have become secular. Men and women dance together, and songs are usually sung by a man or a woman who does not dance. *Küştdepti* begins with a *divana* (literally "becoming mad") melody, followed by the *bir depim*, *üç depim* (one step, three steps) dances. The number and the steps of these dances vary from area to area. "Küşt" is a word of Turkmen shamans who, while curing somebody to remove the bad spirits, danced around him/her, often stamping (dep-) the ground. There are folk dance groups in many Turkmen villages, and fortunately in the majority of these groups there are also older people who help to continue the transmission of the tradition. In 2011 I did field work in Esenguly, near the border between Iran and Turkmenistan, and I recorded melodies sung while an old couple taught the young people to do the dance steps of the *küştdepti*. In the next village, Etrek, the wedding dance was accompanied by a very similar melody, and the bride was greeted with the same type of melody as well.

In Example 8.7, I present a tune series that accompanies the *küstdepti* dance. These short melodies are generally performed in the sequence as seen in Example 8.7, but sometimes melodies can be omitted and certain parts of the melody can be repeated according to the requirements of the dance.



Example 8.7 Motives and a typical melody series of the küstdepti (from the Sipos Turkmen collection)

Example 8.8 shows representative Turkmen women's songs, which are often sung in melody chains. It is also characteristic that the first line of certain melodies is repeated. We see that line *b* in Example 8.7 is closely connected with lines *b*, *c*, and *d* in Example 8.8 (and line *c* in Example 8.7 with line *a* in Example 8.8) in terms of the melodic line and the rhythm.



Example 8.8 Simpler types of women's songs: a) lullaby (Sipos collection No. 177), b) läle (Sipos collection No. 77), c) lullaby (Sipos collection No. 127), d) mourning-song for the dead (Sipos collection No. 179), e) läle "tulip" (song of girls) (Sipos collection No. 174)

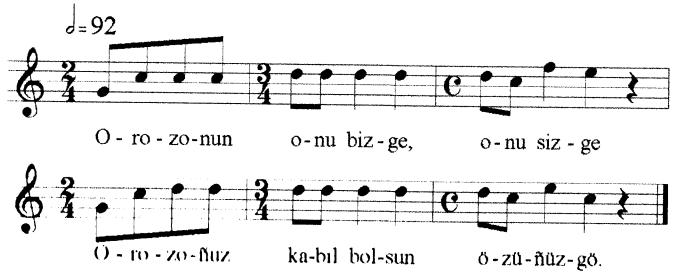
Kyrgyz

After Turkmenistan, let us briefly look at another Central Asian Turkic people, the Kyrgyz. Although the majority of the Kyrgyz people are Sunni, among them one finds the four Sufi *tariqas* ("paths to God"), or Sufi brotherhoods (Naqshbandiya, Qadiriya, Yasawiya, and Kubrawiya). Under the Soviets, the practice of Sufism became highly secretive, even to the point that the silent *zikr* has replaced the *zikr* quoted aloud. I have not collected in Sufi Kyrgyz communities and can only imagine that at least some of their melodies were borrowed from the very colorful folksong repertoire of the Kyrgyz people (Sipos 2014).

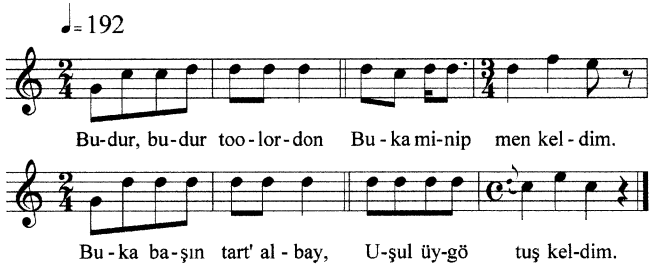
However, I recorded several *Ya Ramazan* (Carapazan) or "Ay, Ramadan" melodies sung during the Ramadan fast. In the month of Ramadan, young boys went from house to house singing *Carapazan* songs to express good wishes and collect money, fruit, and nuts in return. Ramadan songs and practices are also common among Turkish, Kazakh, Uyghur, and Uzbek peoples (although the melodies are different).

Carapazan songs are sung in strings; most of the individual songs are characterized by long ascending-descending "hill-shape" sections and the ♫♫|♫♫|♫♩♩ rhythmic formula. In contrast, Kyrgyz folksongs consist mostly of short sections, and the rhythmic pattern shown above does not occur in them. In contrast to the typically ascending phrases at the beginning of the *Carapazan* songs, folksongs feature descending or "hill-shape" sections. Yet, as the following examples show, it is possible to find folksong parallels to a few *Carapazan* melodies, although only rarely and sporadically.

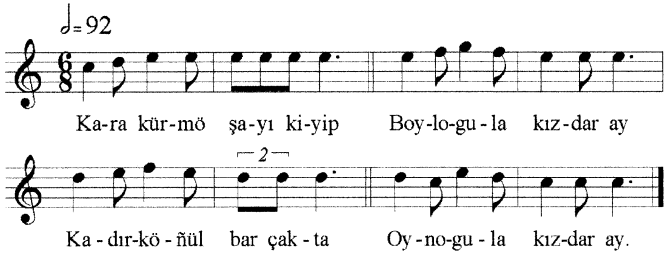
Let me show three examples. In the first one we see a typical two-section *Carapazan* song that features a variant of the characteristic rhythmic pattern seen above (Example 8.9a). The second example is a *Carapazan* song with four seven-syllable sections (Example 8.9b), and Example 8.9c is a Kyrgyz folksong with a melody contour similar to Example 8.9a and 8.9b. All three melodies are close variants in terms of their rhythmic patterns, melodic lines, most important melody stops (the last tone of the sections), and tonality. Although the time signatures are different, the similarities between the melodies are striking.



Example 8.9a Eleven-syllable, two-section Kyrgyz Carapazan song, (from János Sipos's Kyrgyz recordings)



Example 8.9b Seven-syllable, four-section Carapazan song (from János Sipos's Kyrgyz recordings)



Example 8.9c Eight-syllable, four-section Kyrgyz folksong (from János Sipos's Kyrgyz recordings)

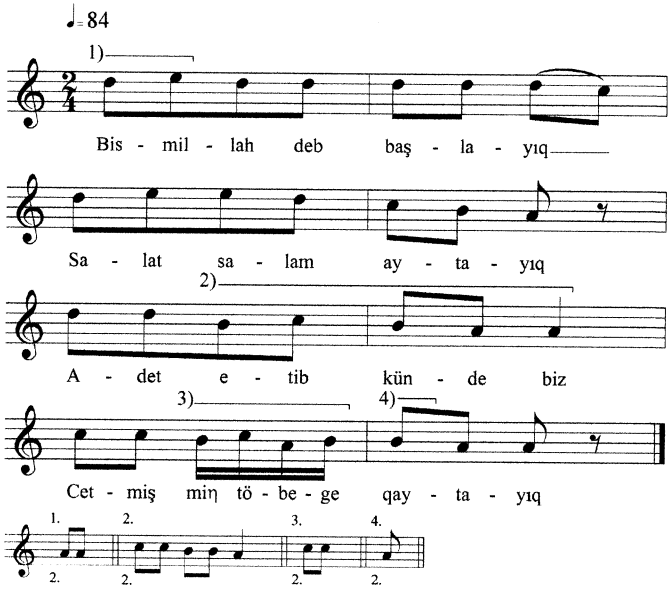
Karachay-Balkar

We return from Central Asia to the Caucasus, this time not to the southern, but to the northern side, where the Sunni Karachay-Balkar people reside. They speak a Kipchak Turkic language and they have an ethnogenesis as complicated as that of many other Turkic peoples. Certain groups of the one-time Hun Empire (e.g., Kipchaks, Khazars, Bulghars, Avars, and other Caucasian peoples) may have contributed to the evolution of the Karachay-Balkars. Living on the northern slopes of the Caucasus Mountains, they sing their *zikir* songs during religious (Sunni) *mevlid*,[26] in other gatherings, or just for themselves. The texts of these melodies teach that one must think about his life; if one is a sinner, he has to do penance; he must not forget death and the false nature of the world, and must not deceive himself. Of course, they also emphasize the importance of remembering Allah, the Almighty God, both day and night.

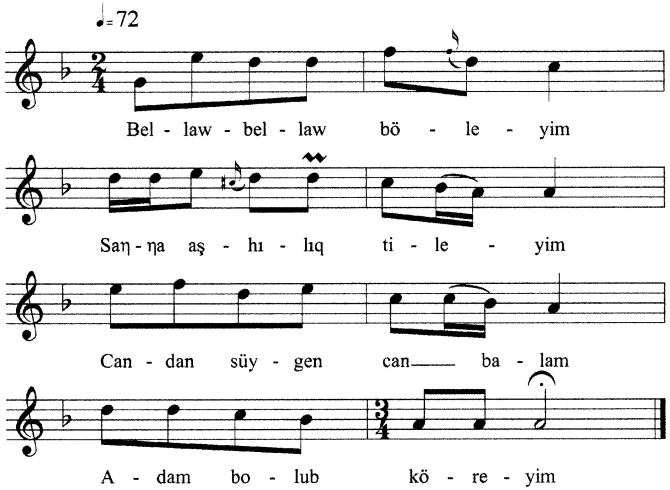
Many Karachay *zikir* songs have folksong parallels. Now we take a closer look at a characteristic melody type from the rich Karachay melody repertoire. These melodies are basically built out of two short (seven- or eight-syllable) sections. The first section descends from the fifth–sixth scale degrees to the third degree, and the second ones descend from the fourth–fifth degree to the tonic note (Examples 8.10 and 8.11).

Similar melodies are sung mostly in *zikir* ceremonies, but there are lullabies of this kind as well. There are two possible explanations for this fact. The first one is that here we are dealing with a laic musical form, which is also used in religious ceremonies. On the other hand, *hajjis* returning from the pilgrimage to Mecca (the Hajj) may have taught the *zikir*s to their acquaintances. So it is possible that these songs may have an external origin, and only later merged with the secular repertoire.

Now let us have a closer look at a *zikir* melody of this type, as well as its lullaby parallel. The two melodies are close variants; all of their sections are descending, and the melodic line of the melodies is very similar. We also see that the second verse of Example 8.10 is even closer to Example 8.11 than the first one. The tonality of the melodies is a little different, but in Karachay melodies the intonation of the second degree (B) can be variable. The time signature, the ♫♫|♫♩ rhythmic pattern, and the important melody stops are again the same.



Example 8.10 Karachay zikr (Sipos 2012, No. 20)



Example 8.11 Karachay lullaby (Sipos 2012, No. 21)

Conclusions

This chapter has examined the connections between folksongs and religious songs of several Turkic-speaking people living across a huge area of Eurasia. The results can be summed up in short: folk Islam frequently borrows melodies from folksong repertoires. Its inverse, according to my observations, occurs much less frequently, and to my knowledge, only among Karachay-Balkars.

I have used the concept "folksong" in the sense of traditional songs sung by women living in small and relatively closed communities. As for folk religions, I discussed the ones about which I have the most extensive and detailed information, that is the music of Anatolian Sufi groups such as the Alevi, Bektashi, and Tahtadji. I also introduced some important events of these Sufi groups, the rituals and also their most eminent poets. Besides songs in Sufi ceremonies, I also dealt with melodies belonging to Sunni Turks, for example pre-Islamic melodies that have become secularized since and were preserved by Sunni Turkmens, Ramadan melodies among Kyrgyz people and the *zikir* songs of the Karachay-Balkars.

Apart from drawing comparisons between religious and folksongs, I also made a few musical analyses in order to highlight the role of melody parallels in the musical world of the Turkic peoples. In the tradition of certain Turkic peoples, the songs in both folk and religious repertoire are relatively formulaic (Azeri and Turkmen), while in other cases a folk repertoire that can be traced back to a few melodies exists alongside a rich religious repertoire (like in the case of the Tahtadji

people), or both the folk and religious repertoire are very diverse and multicolored (like in the case of the Bektashi people).

To explore this topic in detail would require more time, but I hope that the reader has had an opportunity to take a comparative glimpse at the folksongs and religious songs of a few Turkic-speaking peoples.

Notes

1 Mélikoff's and Köprülü's concept might apply to the first half of the twentieth century, but today the Bektashis are not necessarily more urbanized than the Alevis (Clarke 1999: 17).
2 The interview we made with K. Noyan in Izmir reveals that the Bektashis neglect the public discourse around them. However damning or slanderous the opinions about them may be, they will not protest.
3 One of the most concise descriptions of Alevism (Arslanoğlu 2000: 153) lists basic principles, saints, etc. that are fundamental among the Bektashis as well. He interprets Bektashism as a current that plays an important role in spreading Alevism in Anatolia.
4 See also Clarke (1999). Shorter articles: Aydın (1999), Duygulu (1992); anthologies: Duygulu (1997), Eyüboğlu (1983), Gölpınarlı (1992), Nüzhet (1930), Öztelli (1973), *Pir Sultan Abdal* (1976), Tanses (1997), Uluçay (1994); brief references in general books on the Alevis: Atalay (1991), Birdoğan (1988, 1994), Birge (1937), Erseven (1990), Zelyut (1992, 1993) or on Turkish music: (Markoff 1996), Stokes (1992) and a study of semahs: Bozkurt (1995).
5 Boratav: E.I. III: 1094a.
6 The TRT repertoire contains the committee-approved variants of the tunes officially permitted for publication. The committee often makes changes to the tunes before printing, first modifying the words not deemed appropriate. Yaltırık (2000, 2002) published the Alevi-Bektashi tunes from the TRT repertoire as well.
7 HAGEM = *Halk Kültürlerini Araştırma ve Geliştirme Genel Müdürlüğü* (General Directorate of the Research and Development of Folk Culture).
8 In Sipos (1994, 1995) I published several Alevi-Bektashi tunes.
9 Yönetken (1966). Vahit dede was a poet, violin player, Bektashi dede (father) author of the "Gizli Türk Dini Oyunları" (Secret Turkish Religious Dances, Nümune Matbaası, 1941) about the ritual of the Bektashi sect in the European part of Turkey.
10 Salcı (1940).
11 The word *nefes* is of Hebrew origin, translated in the Bible mostly as "being" or "soul." The meaning of the Turkish word is also "soul," but it also means "healing with breathing, incantation." The latter alludes both to the healing effect of collective singing with faith and to its shamanistic origins.
12 The team included Ali Rıfat, Rauf Yekta, Zekâizade Ahmet and Dr. Suphi Ezgi.
13 İstanbul Konservatuvarı Tasnif Heyeti, *Bektaşi Nefesleri*, 1933, İstanbul.
14 The first half of the second book is practically identical to the 2002 publication; the second half (III. bölüm) contains several religious songs (ilahi, nefes, tatyan, deyiş, gülbank and dua) published earlier, too. A CD accompanies the volume.
15 At that time I was a lecturer of the Hungarian Studies in Ankara University and beside this activity (I would even say primarily) I continued Béla Bartók's Anatolian research in 1936.
16 Let me mention that though in Anatolia the second degree of the Aeolian scale is often unstable (for a European ear between the minor and major second), here we are dealing with a Phrygian scale, which is otherwise not very frequent in this area.
17 E.g. in 1985 a Bektashi baba named Hasan Yıldız had, together with his wife, a large assembly room (*dergah*) built on the lowermost level under their house, which even

opened to a pantry. In the foreground of the *dergah* a cooking facility and a washbasin were installed. During the month of mourning *aşure* (Turkish pudding) was cooked on kitchen ranges placed here. The assembly room could be accessed from the main entrance through a narrow passage and down-winding stairs. Entry was also possible from the sidestreet through a small narrow corridor near the coal cellar and the firewood shed.

18 Van Bruinessen (1999: 549–553) wrote a review on Mélikoff's book written on the Bektashis (*Hadji Bektach: un mythe et ses avatars*), and argues that Mélikoff is right to compare *ayin-i cem* with Turkish *toy*, because women and men alike take part in eating and drinking feasts. The reviewer misses, however, the author's mention of Christian elements in the ceremony (e.g. the Last Supper). Van Bruinessen describes the question of both the origin of the Alevi and Bektashi religion and the nationality of its adherents as a very complex one.

19 The sacrament of holy threshold is widespread among Altaic peoples. In his account of travels in 1247 Plano Carpini mentioned that among the Tartars if anyone stepped on the threshold of the khan's yurt, he would be killed without mercy.

20 In Yeni Bedir my wife was also given such pieces of cloth, lest she would feel like a stranger.

21 During our field trip of 2003 a Sunnite family, the relatives of a *baba* and his wife, invited us to a *mevlit* in Kırklareli. It was a merry feast of thanksgiving with at least a hundred guests, with sacrificial animals served, followed by thanksgiving prayers read by women in Arabic from the Quran for hours. The event was held on the first birthday of a sickly grandson. The *baba* himself, although invited, was not present because he regarded the whole ceremony to be hypocrisy.

22 "A whirling dance performed during a Mevlevi service; hearing, mention" (Avery 1974: 997).

23 Sipos and Csáki (2009).

24 Goldziher (1981: 155, 173).

25 Several scholars have addressed the connections between elements of Central Asian Sufism and the shamanism of Turkic-speaking Central Asian tribes: Knorozov (1949), Shukhareva (1959: 130), Bayaliyeva (1981: 83). On Sufism among the Tatars, see Shibgatullina (1997).

26 *mevlid n. Ar.* 1. the birthday of Sufi saints, birth; 2. place of birth; 3. mesnevi (poem) telling the story of Hz. Muhammad's birth and life; 4. religious ceremony of reading out the mesnevi mentioned above.

9 The Circumpontic Lezginka dance as a cultural phenomenon

Alla Sokolova

Introduction

People living in the Black Sea basin have formed a shared cultural complex of dance, known as Lezginka. But how, and why? Why do these particular people, living in the highlands and a warm climate, use the term "Lezginka" as a form of intercultural dialogue? These questions constitute the main focus of this essay.

The geographical term "Circumpontic region" designates the Black Sea coastal area, including the Caucasus, Abkhasia, Georgia, Northern Turkey, Ukraine and the Crimea. In the Russian sciences, this term is used mainly by archaeologists who discovered artefacts in this region that testified to the intensive interaction of different cultures that existed here since ancient times. The unified landscape and environment of the Circumpontic region features similar flora and fauna. In such conditions one can also observe similar cultural artefacts, including choreography. As the people in this region continuously migrated over a long period, an intensive exchange of cultural achievements and knowledge accompanied their migrations. This interaction between various cultures led to the formation of common ceremonies, rituals and dances. As a result, there is a huge number of shared artefacts and values among peoples belonging to different ethnicities and speaking different languages. One of these is the Lezginka dance.

Nearly 50 ethno-national groups recognise the Lezginka as their "national" dance. Among them are the people of Daghestan (e.g. Avars, Dargins, Lezghins, Kumyks), Abazins, Abkhazians, Azerbaijanis, Armenians, Balkars, Georgians, Ingushs, Karachays, Ossetians, Meskhetian Turks (Ahysks), Chechens and others. Most of these groups live in the Circumpontic region. They are united not only by the uniform territory of landscape and climatic conditions, but also by the relationship between their historical destinies, and by cultural commonalities expressed through folklore, values, cultural acts and behavioural norms. Perhaps it is due to the same geo-climatic conditions that these diverse peoples developed similar types of dance.

The people living around the Black Sea, in the Circumpontic area, have many cultural similarities in dwellings, household items, costumes and ritual practice. Lezginka is also a dance practised by many peoples living in the region, speaking different languages yet at the same time sharing aspects of cultural identities. It is